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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8197
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8051
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0748
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1179
INFO RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001376

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DOE FOR GPERSION,CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR SLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2016
TAGS: EPET PGOV ASEC PTER PINR ETRD CASC NI
SUBJECT: BRITON KILLED, ITALIAN INJURED IN
MILITANT-MILITARY CROSSFIRE

REF: LAGOS 1375

Classified By: Consul General Brian Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

¶1. (C) The British hostage kidnapped from AGIP's FPSO Mystras vessel November 22 was killed during a fusillade between the hostage-takers and a military patrol boat the day of the kidnapping. The six other hostages were freed as a result of this encounter. AGIP's Deputy Managing Director, Akin Aruwajoye, told Poloff on November 24 the Italian national was seriously injured and is now in Italy receiving medical attention. Aruwajoye said the other five hostages--one Romanian, a Filipino, a Pole, and two Finns--were not injured but have left the country. An unconfirmed number of militants, media reports suggest two while Poloff's contacts believe more, were killed during the fight. Some government soldiers also lost their lives. According to David Harries of the British Deputy High Commission, AGIP's security company SOS plans to hold a debriefing next week.

¶2. (C) Initial reports were that this encounter was an unfortunate coincidence--that the military patrol just happened upon the kidnappers and their hostages. However, there are some indications that the firefight was more deliberate in nature. Some security contacts and press are reporting the Nigerian military attempted a rescue mission. We will attempt to find out whether this fatal brawl was happenstance or willful. If the latter, then the Nigerian military--at least on this occasion--changed from a passive stance to an aggressive lunge at militant hostage taking. We must ascertain to determine whether this was an anomaly or a true shift in strategy that could have ramifications for the safety of future hostages.

BROWNE